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# INTEGRITY



**"POLLYANNA  
CATHOLICISM"**

**NOT ENOUGH  
FOOLS TO GO  
'ROUND**

**DRAMA AND  
THE APOSTOLATE**

**JULY 1954**

# C O N T E N T S

July 1954, Vol. 8, No. 10

EDITORIAL	1
"POLLYANNA CATHOLICISM"	
By ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN	3
NOT ENOUGH FOOLS TO GO 'ROUND	
By ED WILLOCK	13
CATHOLIC LIFE IN PRESENT-DAY AUSTRIA	
By EVA MARIA KALLIR	17
SONG TO THE CHURCH (A Poem)	
By BEVERLY BOYD	25
DRAMA AND THE APOSTOLATE	
By A. P. CAMPBELL	26
THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND	
By JOHN M. TODD	33
BOOK REVIEWS	40

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## EDITORIAL



It is true, unfortunately, that we Catholics tend to make Catholicism in our own image. There is always our unconscious pull to deface Christianity, to tone down in practice the strong doctrines that we cannot take, to emphasize those elements that appeal to us personally. This is a tug-of-war with the Holy Spirit that goes on constantly in the Church. An apparent tug-of-war it is. For always He keeps the Church infallible, indefectible, with all the perfection she possesses as Christ's Body. But we, her members, are the face she presents to the world. And throughout the centuries this face at various times has been set in many a grimace, made stern in many a frown, distorted many times into ugliness. And then sometimes it takes on a foolish, empty grin. It is this latter visage we are discussing in this issue on "Pollyanna Catholicism."

"Pollyanna Catholicism" tends to be surface Christianity. Its foolishness is not the folly of the Cross. Far from it. It tends to ignore the Cross, to live in glib gladness, to forget that the glory of the Christian—his joy in living already the Resurrected life of Christ—is the result of having fully accepted the Passion. Suffering is a mystery. A baffling, disconcerting one it remains until the Christian accepts it. Even then it does not become less mysterious. In fact, it can be said that the mystery of suffering is crystal-clear only to one who has never suffered. To the suffering Christian the Cross remains a sign of contradiction. That it becomes glorious is the result of grace, of the hidden working of the Holy Spirit in the soul. But its mystery never yields to pat answers. The Cross—the tree of suffering—never gives its fruit without a struggle.

Easy, effortless, suffering-less Christianity is especially inappropriate in the contemporary setting. Neither communism nor secularism can be overcome with ease. There is more to changing the world than merely writing to one's congressman. The Christian's apostolate is a serious matter, an impossible matter if one looks at it from the human standpoint alone. But the Christian trusts that the Holy Spirit will close the gap between his personal ineptitude and the vastness of his mission. The Christian accepts himself with his limitations, his incapacities; but he accepts his

potentialities too, and looks to the Holy Spirit to help him actualize them.

This latter point—of recognizing one's potentialities—is of the greatest importance. If "Pollyanna Catholicism" ignores the folly of the Cross, there is another type of Catholicism (as far as I know unchristened!) which makes apparent embracing of the folly of the Cross an excuse for irresponsibility, for unwillingness to make the effort to succeed. (Often under the spurious reasoning that "A Christian need not be efficient.") Not all failure in the Christian's life and in his apostolate is attributable to the folly of the Cross. It is more pleasant to think that it is, than to face squarely the responsibility for failure.

Talents were given to us to use, not to bury: that is obvious. Yet for certain personalities—the dependent, the immature, and religious romanticists—it is so much easier to refuse to make the effort under the plea of a more docile, "abandoned" type of Christianity. The fact is that the saints who were most completely abandoned to providence (for example, St. Paul, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thomas More) used their human capabilities to the utmost.

When embracing the folly of the Cross is distorted to mean the refusal to use initiative or to take on responsibility in the temporal order or to cultivate talents, not only does the layman abdicate the role peculiar to him as a Christian in the world, but he turns his back on magnanimity. He refuses to do great things for God's glory.

The Christian chooses neither failure nor success as his primary aim, but to further the coming of Christ's kingdom. In accepting temporal responsibilities, if his efforts are crowned with success—God's be the glory; if after striving he fails—again, God be glorified. That is all there is to it. One way or another, in living his Christ life, he will come to experience the folly of the Cross (perhaps publicly, maybe privately, externally or deep within his soul). But for him, no self-willed folly; how he becomes a fool is up to God to decide.

THE EDITOR



## “Pollyanna Catholicism”

**W**E don't know if our readers have heard the expression “Pollyanna Catholicism” before but we're certain that they'll recognize its manifestations all around them. The logical outcome of the spirit of “Pollyanna Catholicism” is strikingly shown in the ghastly movie “Demetrius and the Gladiators,” in which history is re-written so that all the early Christians—including St. Peter—escape martyrdom and settle down to enjoy life!

Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, at present living in Austria, is familiar to American Catholics as a writer and lecturer. He dedicates his article to G. C., who is active in the ecumenical movement.

**Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn:** *Corruptio optimi pessima* is an old Latin proverb implying that nothing is worse than the best things in their decadence, apostatizing from their essence and betraying their mission. A fallen angel like Lucifer, a treacherous apostle like Judas Iscariot, a rotten pope like John XXIII, a wicked king like Henry VIII—they all prove this saying without fail. Yet what is true of persons is also terribly true of nations—seemingly only very great nations can fall very low—and, in a way, can equally be applied to ideas, to verities and even to divine institutions. In this case, of course, man himself is the corruptor.



Small sects of little historic importance, one has to admit, have often achieved a remarkable degree of "limited perfection," but if we believe that the corruption of the best is the worst, then the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church must have produced the worst aberrations. This precisely is the case. The Plymouth Brethren never had in their ranks anyone like some of the late medieval popes, and the rectories of the United Southern Four Square Gospel Methodist Church hardly ever were such sinks of iniquities as some of our fifteenth century convents. The very survival of our Church—as Boccaccio's Parisian Jew in his *Decamerone* knew only too well—is not the work of man, but of God. Without the divine promises and the fact that the Church is Christ's Mystical Body, we would have gone down the drain of history a long, long time ago.

### **a wart on the Body**

Still, when we are talking about "Pollyanna Catholicism" we are not dealing with a grave and universal cancer on the body Catholic. This is a minor and localized disease which has the character of a wart rather than of a tumor. Yet a wart can have a disfiguring effect and on the tip of a fair maiden's nose it might prevent her enjoying the bliss of love or be an unsurmountable obstacle on her road to marriage. For this reason the beauty defects of our Church are no laughing matter and, in a way, have to be taken seriously. How many outside the fold caught glimpses of Catholic life which made them shudder and, sometimes, forever dissuaded them from taking another look at a closer range: the Presbyterian minister who once, out of a mixture of boredom and whimsical curiosity, opened a Catholic periodical which emanated an almost diabolic spirit of hatred, spite and rancor; the sensitive Episcopalian lady who gasped with horror when she ventured into a Catholic church and there saw an orgy of all artistic monstrosities of the late nineteenth century; the inquisitive young Jew from the University of Chicago, fed a "Catholicism" consisting of oversimplifications, glib phrases and other "shortcuts" to truth everlasting.

All these men and women stumbled over a mere footnote of the Church. It certainly is their fault that they never arrived at the essence of truth on earth. It is their fault to have been thwarted by so little, theirs—and ours. Ours indeed, because *we* are responsible for the face and the expression of the Church. How can we go on expecting grace swiftly to surmount the needless psychological obstacles engendered by the frightful blemishes of a disfigured Mystical Body?

## "Catholicism is fun"

"Pollyanna Catholicism" exists only in English-speaking countries. In all our travels and trips we have not found it anywhere else. The term itself we have chosen because we are here face to face with a phenomenon which not only almost assumes the character of an "ism," but also because its essence is a naive, childish—I would almost say girlish—gladness. Yet this "gladness" is not the deeper, inner gladness which is almost synonymous with joy, but rather the superficial happiness related to the "glad guy." The "message" of "Pollyanna Catholicism" is very simple: "Catholicism is fun." As a matter of fact it is a scream to be a Catholic; priests and nuns are the dearest, jolliest, sweetest and killingest people under the sun; tragedy or sadness is only for the mentally deranged, for atheists and highbrow sourpusses. The truths, truisms and commonplaces of our faith are so simple and so snappy that any child, movie actor or music hall comedian could pick them up and digest them in a jiffy; to see insoluble problems in this world is sheer Jansenism. A cocktail of fragments haphazardly torn out of certain encyclicals plus a *pêle-mêle* of *Summa* citations served with a sauce of wisecracks copied from Chesterton solves *everything*.

To all this must be added the conviction that had we only the right cartoonists, nine more Jimmy Durantes, a hundred-thousand-bucks-a-year public relations man in Rome, Hollywood, Washington and Radio City we might get, for our Church, Western civilization neatly delivered in a package. A better hold on television, an all-Catholic baseball team winning the World Series, and a copy of the *Cozy Catholic Convert's Catechism* in the night-table drawer of every hotel, alongside the Gideon Bible, would make the evils of the world disappear in no time.

## mirth is a virtue

These observations do not imply in the least that there is something basically wrong with America, Britain, Canada and the other Dominions Beyond the Sea. Every nation has its virtues and shortcomings, its mediocrities and banalities. Humor is a wonderful thing and it is a concomitant of Christianity because the disproportion between the sublime and the base, the perfect and the imperfect, the eternal and the temporal constantly will appeal to our sense of humor, an advantage the monistic-materialistic world certainly does not possess. The gospels, we must admit, never recorded that Our Lord laughed or that He even smiled. These accounts *necessarily* are incomplete, yet if, indeed, Christ

never gave external signs of having been amused, one might explain this from His divine nature because God sees everything at once in its "completeness" and (potential) fulfillment. The realization of the comic pertains to man's and, especially, to fallen man's psychological structure. Saint Thomas was well aware of that and called lack of mirth positively sinful.

"Pollyanna Catholicism" is not genuinely humorous. It never evokes liberating laughs, because laughing expresses something extreme, and from extremes "Pollyanna Catholicism" naturally recoils. It stands for "small change." It is refined mediocrity. It is "Lilliput Catholicism" for religious pygmies. It is incompatible with sanctity because it is opposed to greatness. With all the joy the saints are carrying in themselves, they make us somewhat uncomfortable, or at least restless. "Pollyanna Catholicism" on the other hand puts us "at ease." It promises us a Mohammedan paradise (minus sex) on earth. It has no understanding whatsoever for the words of Léon Bloy: "Jesus, Thou prayest for those who crucify Thee, and Thou crucifiest those who love Thee."

### **mournful and medieval**

Yet we are convinced that "Pollyanna Catholicism" has roots which are probably British rather than American, English rather than Irish, Welsh or Scotch. It has been born in a spirit of analogy to a particular type of a (more or less) genteel Anglicanism aglow with an aura of all sorts of niceties. This all-too-short allusion surely will be understood by all those familiar with a certain aspect of the English scene dominated by a "dry humor" and a real horror for all absolutes. Still, nursery-rhyme Anglicanism alone does not explain the rise of "Pollyanna Catholicism." Equally important is an old charge against our faith, to wit that it is "medieval," mournful, reactionary, repressive, cruel, morbid and enslaving. And, indeed, in certain areas of the Catholic world, medieval aspects of life and faith still survive. The burial brotherhoods in some of the Mediterranean cities, the Penitentes in the New World, the vaults of the Capuchins in Rome where the skeletons of the Princesses Barberini tastefully assembled as candelabras are dangling from the ceiling, or the corridors of the Franciscan Monastery in Palermo with the deceased brothers leaning as mummies against the wall—all this is a little bit too much for the nerves and dispositions of "enlightened" and "progressive" British and American travellers—among whom, oddly enough, we would have to include our "Pollyanna Catholics."



From Froude and Kingsley to Maria Monk and Coulton there has always been a holy terror inspired by the Catholic faith and Catholic forms as something magic, demonic and immoral. "Pollyanna Catholicism" came into existence in order to deflate this very picture of an ancient, demoniacal and sinister Catholicism and to represent it as something entirely harmless and tame. It rose from the pages of Catholic humorists and apologists, from the drawing boards of Catholic cartoonists and from the lips of Catholic soapbox orators and after-dinner speakers. It was born as a piece of clever defensive action, part mimicry, part counterattack, and intoxicated primarily those busy in manufacturing this brew. We have within our ranks real addicts to "Pollyanna Catholicism," and there is a certain danger that it might become the *popular* form of the faith of a most important part of the Catholic orbit.

### **it's all a joke**

What then is the essence of "Pollyanna Catholicism"? First of all, it tells to the faithful and the infidels alike that the faith is by no means a "yoke" (the sweet yoke of Christ) but that to be a Catholic is great fun. It tells us that as soon as you become a Catholic almost every problem is solved, every intellectual question is answered, every dilemma disposed of. The cross which every Christian has to carry is naively forgotten. We are being told that there is nothing at all serious, tragic, profound or esoteric about the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith, which are hilarious as a comic strip, easy to understand as an elementary reader, painless as a haircut, modern as a jet plane, chummy as an Elk convention, soothing as a cough syrup, smart and fashionable as a Dior dress, streamlined as a Studebaker and more advantageous for your mental health than five thousand dollars worth of brain surgery. There is nothing, so the argument goes, that we had not ages ago, that we have not the answer for. St. Augustine anticipated Charles Darwin; the mystics with their gift of ubiquity got better service than we from railroads or television; Chesterton, Belloc, St. Thomas and Suárez had all the answers for all the questions. He who does not join the Catholic Church is a fool who misses the best things in life rather than—as in many cases—a tragic figure wrestling against terrible odds with the meaning of human existence. Hardly are we aware of the fact that some of those outside the Church have not seen anything but "Pollyanna Catholicism," this pseudo-Catholic clowning on a family circus level which has the tendency to branch out in all sorts of directions.

"Pollyanna Catholicism" rests on a profound error as to the true spirit of our faith. There is, as we have stated before, such

a thing as Catholic humor and even, believe it or not, Catholic satire. But neither of these has anything to do with that cheap sweetness we get in the comic, darling Little Nuns with their pouting mouths like baby carps or the Father who looks like a clerical Dick Tracy, Jack Dempsey and Bing Crosby rolled into one. Don't misunderstand me; a true Catholic is anything but a "clerical"; there are innumerable priests, friars and nuns who are extremely comical and present excellent targets for humor and satire. There is nothing at all wrong in joking about the terrestrial aspects of the Catholic laity or the hierarchy. "Reverence" of that sort never characterized Catholic civilizations. Yet there is, I am afraid, nothing intrinsically amusing, funny, comical or droll about *being* a priest or a nun. The decision for entering upon that state of life is deadly serious.

### "a vale of tears"

Every conscious imitation of Christ is deadly serious because the Savior's life on earth, thoroughly changing mankind's relation with God, was of unique importance—the whole life of Christ, starting with the dramatic circumstances of His Incarnation, birth, the flight to Egypt, and leading finally to the Garden of Gethsemani where the Son of Man was sweating blood, to betrayal, to the cruel death on the Cross, the rising from the dead, Ascension and martyrdom of almost all of His disciples. "Jesus will agonize until the end of the world; one ought not to sleep during this time." Naturally one can charge that Pascal, who wrote these words, was a Jansenist which, indeed, he was, but the fact remains that the agony in the Garden of Gethsemani, the darling Little Nuns and the two-fisted crooning priests from the Hollywood movies providing box office records, just do not mix. (Don Camillo may be two-fisted, but we have seen him in terrible solitude, deserted,

### SOPHOMORES ALL

When we brag of our degrees  
And of our lovely schools,  
Let's face the possibility:  
We're educated fools!



and with tears in his eyes. No pillar of "Pollyanna Catholicism" he!)

By concentrating on the frills of our faith, by remaining deaf to the nostalgia of tortured souls and honestly inquiring minds outside of our community, by cheapening down and distorting the very character of the gospels, by ignoring the fact that God is still essentially to us a Hidden God, whom man frequently can only approach after terrible struggles, ceaseless efforts and desperate calls—we are doing something truly negative. Of course, real despair for the Christian is not legitimate, but the Christian certainly can be *sad*. "Pollyanna Catholics" should take notice that this earth is a "vale of tears," and that there is nothing Jansenistic or Manichaeian about this passage in a great prayer. A short moment of recollection reminding us of the diabolic suffering of millions of fellow Christians east of the Iron Curtain should predispose us to view the gay manifestations of "Pollyanna Catholicism" at least with a slight air of skepticism.

One repeatedly encounters a standard defense of this "Catholicism in Six Easy Lessons." The average non-Catholic, so the argument runs, presented with this nifty and charming picture of the faith and the Church, will drop all his odious prejudices and immediately "fall" for the Mystical Body. That this occasionally may be true, we will not deny. Still, one has to doubt that by this sort of bait we will attract the very best outside the Church, those who need the truth and the light most. There is a definite danger that this picture of the faith will primarily appeal to the lightweights who, out of a certain emptiness and metaphysical boredom, are just "shopping around" and are happy to find a "handy," arty and charming religion which now, losing its social handicaps, is getting a foothold in the mink-coat set and also provides their flabby souls with a snugly fitting corset. There is no escape from suffering, and it is the Cross which makes suffering *meaningful*, thus eliminating despair which is the product of *senseless* suffering. It was Strindberg who asked for the epitaph on his tombstone: "*Ave O Crux, Unica Spes*." From mere Fish-on-Friday people we, again, ought to become the depositaries of the Cross.

### **"Catholic Smart Aleckism"**

No doubt the quest of the very best, of suffering souls and thirsting minds, will not effectively be met by the cheap images, the snap arguments, the sometimes arrogant salesmanship of "Pollyanna Catholicism" and "Catholic Smart Aleckism," the twin

brother of the former. The latter reaches much further than Catholic cartoons, movies, wisecracks, *bon mots* and rectory jokes. "Catholic Smart Aleckism" promises "all the answers to all the questions" and thus acts as the intellectual counterpart to the superficial sentimentalities of "Pollyanna Catholicism." "Problems? Only the others have 'em; we've solved them all," as a Catholic philosophy professor once declared to his students in class. "Catholic Smart Aleckism" implies that if only the papal encyclicals would be put into action, straight Thomism would be taught in Harvard and strict enough laws would be passed to prevent the sale of modern novels and the showing of films with D ratings, the Devil would be licked, the Kremlin would collapse, history would come to a standstill, and all moral, economic, psychological and political problems eliminated.

It can be argued that this cocksure optimism has to be understood against the background of the ghastly failure of modern civilization, but modern man, however miserable and desperate, vaguely senses that our "Catholic Smart Alecks" overreach themselves. "The history of every human being is the history of a failure," is a sentence from Sartre, but in earthly relations it is quite correct. *We can hope for heaven, but not for paradise.* We cannot promise paradise because man's nature is a fallen nature, and because emphatically while having some answers, we do *not* have *all* the answers. *God alone has them.* To put ourselves in God's place is sheer blasphemy. For every answer we find (and we constantly find new, valid answers) there are ten or a hundred more new problems to be solved. To the uneducated or uninitiated in or outside the Church our knowledge looks like the huge, concrete surface of a giant airdrome, but once the plane is high up in the air the solid, immutable concrete mass appears hardly to be larger than a postage stamp.

### **no more problems!**

Much of this particular evil, which repels rather than attracts the non-Catholic, is due to the training in Catholic colleges. Mr. (now Father) William B. Hill in a brilliant article published in *America* (March 13, 1943) acknowledged that "there is ample evidence that medieval philosophy and sixteenth century apologetics, as they are combined in our colleges, have been largely responsible for some of the imperfections of our graduates." No wonder that after leaving college the student's "tendency henceforward is to become an angry champion of faith and morals." He engenders "Smart Aleckism" on the highest level. Fully con-



fident that he will crash the gates and shake the world by coldly building up mountainous arguments out of dry syllogisms he remains blissfully ignorant that "life lays a trap for logicians. The more logically sound they are, the less psychologically sound they may be."

Again and again we have witnessed discussions in which the Catholic participants have pulled out arguments with the ease and good-humored contempt of a magician pulling rabbits out of his top hat. Again and again we have heard concepts like the "Natural Law" glibly mentioned by these *terribles simplificateurs* as if its existence could be proved with a swift legerdemain. Boundless irritation on one side and the thinly veiled accusation of invincible ignorance suggested on the other, with the abyss wider than ever before, have been only too often the result of such "conversations"—conversations, not conversions. Yet invincible ignorance characterizes fallen man and we all are invincibly ignorant in *some* matters. No wonder therefore that this failing frequently appears where reason alone is bound to founder and ("incalculable") grace has to co-operate. Our faith cannot adequately be approached by an intellectual "Smart Aleckism" because its great mysteries will always escape the "deft handling" by "thinking machines," be they of a human order or a product of I.B.M. Of all this St. Thomas was acutely aware when years before his death he had laid down his pen.

And since we have alluded to the soap box before, let me remind you of a brilliant orator, the late Father Vincent McNabb, whose saintliness captivated and impressed all those who listened to him. Though certainly capable of "thinking on his feet" his honesty never permitted him to reply to hecklers and sincere inquirers with snap answers. Again and again he would humbly say, awkwardly smiling: "I just could not tell you," "I really don't know," "I would have to think that over." Yet curiously enough, each time he confessed his ignorance, he scored for the cause he defended.

### **the Church Militant**

"Pollyanna Catholicism" and "Catholic Smart Aleckism" with their racy clichés, their arrogance and oversimplifications have, to the "outsider," another meaning than to the addicts of these deviations within our ranks. These two phenomena help to convince the non-Catholics that the Church is something like a colossal industrial enterprise, a super Standard Oil with armies of devoted, slogan shouting, unthinking partisans on the march and a variety of circus performances as a "come on," running at the same time. Yet the

Church is by no means a smoothly functioning mammoth institution of clowns and robots, directed by a general manager with twenty-four table phones and seventy secretaries. Neither is she an international chain of soul clinics and life guidance centers, nor is her theology a gigantic file of ten thousand little drawers with "all the answers" in form of a streamlined, divine "Information, Please!" Indeed it is good to be a Catholic, it is a noble thing and pleasing in the eyes of God to be a good Catholic, and God wants *everyone* to be a good Catholic. But it is by no means always "great fun" to be a Catholic. It may involve inhuman suffering—and not only from the hands of fanatic enemies of Christ and His Church. Worse than that: one may suffer not only with the Church, but also *within* the Church and *through* the Church.

This, our Church, is the Church Militant and this implies a real, *live* organism with all the human passions on the loose and which, therefore, can go through every imaginable crisis in which obedience is clashing with disobedience, loyalty with disloyalty, intelligence with stupidity, generosity with greed, sanctity with real evil, surrender to God's will with naked ambition. The two-thousand-year-old tradition, the rational character of our doctrines, infallibility on the highest plane—all this does not dispense the individual thinking, struggling Catholic from wrestling in a very personal way with each tenet, each new cognition, each problem in life. The tasks may be clear, but they have to be *mastered* nonetheless. The true Catholic is fully a human being, *homo sapiens, proles Dei*, dedicated to the quest of truth, "condemned to be free," exposed to all risks, called to create—and neither a clown, a parrot or a robot.

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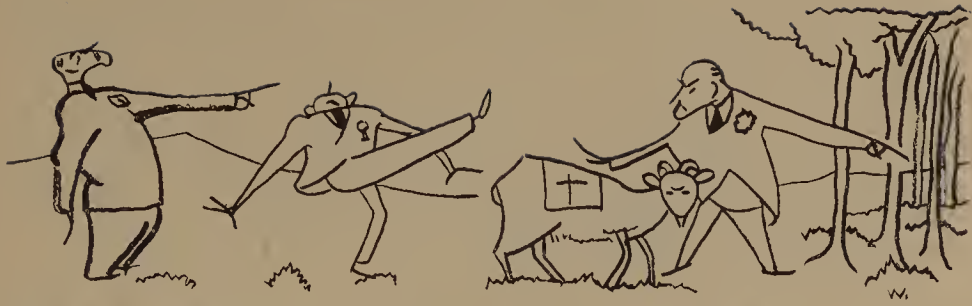
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## Not Enough Fools to Go 'Round

**T**AKING our Catholicism seriously won't make us less of a fool but more of a fool. Such is Ed Willock's theme. Incidentally, he did the cover and most of the artwork in this issue.

**Ed Willock:** Those who were so privileged to know the late Peter Maurin will never forget his gift for putting things as beautifully blunt as a baseball bat. Such memories are especially nostalgic in the light of the present broadcasts from Washington filled as they are with sly adjectives, innuendo, inference, sloppy English, simulation, and other forms of hooey.

I recall particularly Peter's saying, "Christianity is a sucker philosophy. The trouble, today, is that there are not enough suckers to go 'round!" After you recover from the first shock of this bombastic rhetoric, you realize that Peter had picked the precise vulgarism (sucker) which coincided with the classical use of the term "fool" and the Old Testament name "scapegoat." He was pointing to the often overlooked fact that the Incarnation was divinely planned so that God might be in the position to take the rap for men's sins. If we had our liturgical zoology straight, we would know that the title "Lamb of God" really means "*scapegoat of God.*" Christ was the divinely appointed "fall guy," and by Baptism we are selected for the same role.

(By the way, the dictionary tells us that "*scapegoat*" refers to the fact that the ancient Jewish high priest used to lay the sins of the people upon a goat which was then driven into the wilderness. Apparently "scapegoat" is short for "expiation-goat.")

We Christians of today, with our propensities for propriety, pomp, and prosperity, don't (above all) wish to be suckers. Why, we ask, should the righteous take the rap when there are commies

and nasty pagans around to be the scapegoats? We are more prone (and more competent, we think) to adopt the other office of Christ: that of Judge. There are inquisitors, critics, honorable men, experts on immorality and disclaimers all over the place, but there is no one willing to take the rap. When the avengers go looking for the goat upon whom the expiation of our sins can be laid, as righteous men we contribute our dutiful help by pointing and saying, "He just went thata way!"

There is ample evidence to indicate that God anticipated and (we may say) chose that His Christian people would be looked upon as a race of clowns. This, in my opinion, is the inference of Rouault, the contemporary French painter when he reverently portrays Christ as a Clown. In the light of worldly wisdom the behavior of the true Christian is a scream. To see the clown in Christ we must see Him through the eyes of the Romans of his day. These wise and proud pagans had no background in prophetic revelation to help them decipher the enigma of an obscure carpenter's claiming to be divine. They saw Christ as the world sees Him, which is in a light altogether different from the one in which He is seen by His own who rejected Him. When Pilate, the Roman governor, exclaimed, "I see no harm in this man," he might as well have said (judging by his Roman background and his subsequent surrender to the will of the Jews), "He looks to me like a harmless nut."

And don't forget that the crown of thorns, which has become for us a sacred symbol of Christ's true Kingship, was actually stuck on His Head in the spirit of fun. The Cross, in the eyes of the Romans, was a comic cartoon and the inscription "King of the Jews" was its hilarious caption. Christ was no stoic, nor did He appear to be a hero. Later, some few Romans may have admired the courage of Christians in the face of the lions, but the general impression was that they were absurd crack-pots.

Christian efforts throughout the centuries have been characteristically feats of folly usually ending (it would appear to their contemporaries) in failure. As if to try and humiliate us, God in general has permitted a time-lapse to occur between ghastly failures and ultimate triumph. These perennial Good Friday's try the strongest faith. Those with no faith at all, look upon these flops as the inevitable collapse of a theory that was wacky to begin with, and seldom wait to see the Easter.

### **the show must go on**

Although we might like to think that the Church has matured and emerged from the age of folly, we can easily prove the



contrary by putting the faith into practice today. The modern world, oriented as it is to sandwiching paradise into the time-lapse between the womb and the tomb, sets the true Christian apart not as a hero nor as a seer but as a fool. For them to do otherwise would be to admit the folly of the ends to which their own lives are dedicated. Based on the premises of the revelations which we as Christians accept, we can convince one another that it is wise to be honest, selfless, generous, meek, humble and prayerful. To those who reject the first premise, such conclusions are just double-talk. Some sins, it is true, have sorry results in this life. Crime (for example) does not pay, but, as one wise crook put it, "That's only true if you make a mistake" (get caught). We have such a thing as "ethics" which, though appealed to as though it were a holy creed, in practice amounts to no more than that one should avoid detection—which is "bad for business."

Yes, some sins hurt before the grave and some virtues are rewarded here on earth, but this is by no means the rule. When I was visiting the hospital to see my wife and new baby, another visiting father beside me looked unhappily at the bill he had just received and exclaimed, "Anyone's a fool who has children!" I nodded in agreement. From the point of view of worldly prudence, he was absolutely right.

I know a Catholic doctor in a large city who charges only thirty-five dollars to deliver a baby. I know a family presently paying off a delivery bill of one hundred and fifty dollars to a doctor who actually arrived only in time to congratulate the mother and examine the new-born baby. Now which of these two doctors is regarded by his colleagues as a fool?

I know a car-repair man who is honest. In his garage he has a chart which lists the prices he pays for all parts. His fee by the hour is four dollars. He tells his customer, when a job is done, how many minutes he spent on his car and the parts he replaced. Then he says, "Make out your own bill; my addition is bad." What do you think the local chamber of commerce thinks of this man?

I haven't space for more examples of super-natural prudence (which, to all appearances, was the motivating force in the few cases I have cited). My point is that in today's secular climate Christian behavior looks as ludicrous as it did under Nero.

**and it's a good thing, too!**

That Christian behavior should look silly is by no means a misfortune. I'll give two reasons. The first reason is that it is humiliating. Nothing is so provocative of humility as humiliation. We are fortunate, if through our virtuous acts, we are seen

for the fools we actually are. It is our sins that often gain us esteem. The ridicule of the world keeps us from glorying in what appear to be our achievements, but which are in fact the doings of the Almighty.

The second and more important reason for being content to accept the category of fool is because the glory of God is made most manifest seemingly by ineffectual little men. Christians confound the wise less by their genius than by their folly. The historic greatness of St. Francis of Assisi flows from the fact that in the eyes of his contemporaries he was a silly little man. Napoleon, by contrast, merely demonstrated the genius of Napoleon. God seems to work best with highly inadequate tools. Genius by itself mystifies, whereas holiness is so transparent that it is easy to see God working behind it.

### **Christian humor is charity**

If we enjoy a gracious rapport with all reality, seeing in each event the handiwork of a loving Father, this insight is no credit to us. God has been kind to us. We should not be surprised if the vision of the worldly is less discerning. If they regard as a threat those exigencies of circumstance against which they so carefully guard, but which we recognize as the designs of providence, we should not deride them for their fears. If they are unable to swallow the dogmas which we take for granted, the width of our gullets is to be credited to God alone, certainly not to our genius. If any man is (according to prevailing norms) less than we, it does not befit us to damn him for his lack of good fortune. If we can add to his stature we must do so. If we cannot increase his stature, we should at least bend our knees and bow our heads so that what added inches we might possess may not be noticed. Let us remember that Aquinas listened carefully while a sophomore explained an abstruse point of doctrine.

### **POOR SPLENDOR**

Oh, lives of contradiction!  
They suffer without frowns.  
They wear a crown of thorns,  
A regal race of clowns.



# Catholic Life in Present-Day Austria

**A***FTER having resided in the United States for a number of years, Eva Maria Kallir is back in her native Austria. We asked her to write us about conditions in the Church there.*

**Eva Maria Kallir:** A Sunday in Advent: at the Benedictine church in Vienna, High Mass, sung by the people as well as the boys of the school, has just been finished. As the candles are extinguished on the big Advent wreath (families' wreaths were blessed at a special ceremony at the beginning of Advent) you emerge from the church. You take a look at the notice-board, which announces a wealth of lectures, courses, and group meetings, and you are accosted by a small boy who asks for a contribution, "so that some one may have a warm room at Christmas." Thus, on a Sunday morning, you may get a pretty good idea of the elements that make up Catholic life in Austria these days—religious, intellectual, and economic.

## **a Catholic country**

Nominally, Austria is a Catholic country—other denominations, though perfectly free in all respects, have a comparatively negligible membership. Actually, only a small percentage of the Catholics go to church, especially in the city, though many of those who don't would never think of themselves as anything but Catholics. They throng the churches at Christmas and Easter and New Year's, at the Corpus Christi procession and on a few other occasions when religion passes out of the personal sphere and, by way of a long tradition, becomes a custom that is seasonal, social and secular.

This state of affairs stands at the end of a long development. The rationalism of the last two centuries, which considered religion at best as a sentimental embellishment of life, at worst as a harmful superstition, and at any rate as something very private and rather embarrassing, which "one doesn't talk about," is slow in dying. Add to this the remnants of a certain anti-clericalism, which, how-

ever, is losing its foundations as the Church in Europe is taking an increasingly outspoken stand on social questions. And add, moreover, the unfortunate fact that the Socialist Party (one of the two that make up the present coalition government) which is supported by at least forty per cent of the voters, persists—though fiercely anti-communist—in its traditional and by now quite archaic hostility to religion. An attitude deplored by thoughtful people on both sides, which causes conflict and religious estrangement among many who see in this party political and economic welfare.

Of the lay activities discussed in the following pages, most of which belong to the official Catholic Action, there are few which, like the Legion of Mary (increasingly active in the past years) have the direct aim of bringing people back to the Church. Yet it will perhaps be seen that their often rather unpretentious work effects a meeting of the Christian reality in its different aspects with an everyday world that may have ceased to be aware of it.

The years of Nazi occupation, with its veiled or outright religious persecution, saw a quickening of fervor and solidarity among those Catholics who did not fall away altogether, there being little possibility at the time for the comfortable, easygoing attitude that returned with religious freedom. When the Austrian republic was re-established, the Church was no longer, as it had been, linked with the state; and the feeling seems to be that it is all to the good, even if it means a struggle for rights formerly guaranteed. One of these is state recognition of Church marriages (at present it is necessary for a couple to go through the ceremony in front of a justice of the peace, in order to be legally married; a piece of Nazi legislation which the Austrians haven't gotten around to revising). The fight for religious schools would seem familiar to Catholics in the U. S.; however, the claim here is for outright state support.

### **not self-consciously radical**

But the Austrian is averse to any kind of fanaticism, to anything that smells of "sects," even within the Church; to movements that are too self-consciously radical and "queer." Again and again, as you come across the most diverse types of lay activity, you are struck by a feeling of the organic rather than the organized.

Typical of this is the parish-centeredness, notably of youth groups, which, in contrast to the pre-war abundance of sometimes rather secularized organizations, is now required by the Church. This "Parish Youth" often has a lively and diversified program,



including discussions and study groups as well as sports, notably the ever-popular hiking and skiing. In city as well as country churches, it is not infrequently at the core of much that gets done in the way of liturgical, social or practical accomplishments. Not that there are no other youth groups, of more specialized purposes; notably the academic groups among university students and graduates, and, among the workers, the KAJ (Young Christian Workers) which was new in Austria after the war, and is growing rapidly in membership and influence. Their Good Friday campaign for the observance of one minute's silence and prayer at three in the afternoon is spreading from year to year. It is prepared in advance by leaflets and word of mouth and carried out by KAJ militants, who cease work at that time, remind those present of the death of Christ, and say an Our Father—wherever they may be at the time, in factories, shops or offices, even in streetcars and railroads. Many KAJ members devote the wages for the hour from three to four on Good Friday to the support of needy seminarians. This year on May 1st, the international Day of Workers, the KAJ organized a great nation-wide pilgrimage of young workers to Austria's famous shrine of Mariazell.

### **participation in the Mass**

When, fresh from America, you first attend Mass in an Austrian church, several things are likely to strike you. One may be that the priest seems to have a lot more time—a trait he shares with the people (and which comes out quite noticeably in the confessional). Secondly, a completely "low," i.e. silent Mass is quite rare, even on weekdays; there will at least be hymns, varying in accordance with the Church year, and it must be admitted that these sometimes do make you long for complete silence. More often, though, there will be one of the vernacular "sung Masses," a specialty of German-speaking countries. Their text closely follows the Mass, corresponding to its various parts; the two most popular ones were composed by Schubert and Michael Haydn, respectively. They are familiar to every Catholic from his grade-school days, and though admittedly not the ideal, they do make for a wide participation and understanding of what is happening at Mass. Very often, parts of such sung Masses alternate with commonly recited Mass prayers in German, while the shorter responses are given in Latin by the congregation. Some such type of community Mass is required by the hierarchy for every church, at least for one Sunday Mass.

A completely Latin *Missa Recitata* is rather an exception, found mostly in churches frequented by students or connected with

Catholic schools. In these you can also hear High Mass sung by the congregation, as is the case in the Benedictine church mentioned at the beginning. At the Vienna *Katholikentag* two years ago, a huge national Catholic convention, this was tried for the first time with a very large, very mixed and untrained congregation in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral, with amazingly good results; possibly a sign that it might fairly easily become a more widespread practice.

It must be noted here that the average Austrian knows no more Latin than the average American. Most people here know the shorter Latin answers at Mass; many people in America know the much longer and harder Latin hymns at Benediction (Benediction here is usually in German). An argument, conceivably, against the alleged impossibility of partial Latin participation.

One innovation brought on by the war has come to stay: evening Mass. It is held in some churches on weekdays, in most on Sundays, and is in both cases better attended than morning Masses. Nor are other evening services confined to holy days. In fact, from strolling into churches and reading notice boards, one seems to get the impression that something is going on quite often, and people there for it. This in spite of a drastic shortage of priests and lack of vocations, which has led to the grotesque situation of exiled Chinese priests being stationed in little out-of-the-way villages in the Austrian alps!

The Easter Night liturgy has been introduced in many churches since it was first permitted three years ago, though many others have not yet given up old customs. This is understandable, since Austria here has a special handicap to overcome. The "Resurrection Service" on Holy Saturday afternoon, complete with hymns, processions and new hats, is a tradition so deeply rooted that it practically means Easter to many people, and especially the older generation is much upset at being deprived of it. It is amusing to follow the cautious, half-hour steps with which Holy Saturday services move from year to year, from afternoon to evening, and toward the real night-time liturgy that stretches into the early Easter morning. Here again the Benedictines have taken the lead: Easter night at a Benedictine abbey is an adventure of overwhelming beauty, especially in the country, where the villagers carry home on lighted candles the newly-blessed fire, and the old Easter fires flame on the surrounding mountains.

### **Catholic intellectual life**

Catholic initiative, however, is not confined to the strictly religious sphere. It can definitely be felt in the intellectual and

cultural life of present-day Austria, although those who have such a "leavening" at heart will tell you it has not gone nearly far enough. Catholics have, for example, got into leading positions on some radio stations. This is quite noticeable in certain programs, especially those that take notice of holy days, the regular religious program for the sick, some excellent group discussions, and lectures on theological and philosophical topics.

The Vienna diocese sponsors two very extensive programs of adult education. One, on a more popular level, distributes among the various parishes its courses and lectures, which take in subjects of family and practical interest, languages, health, books, nature, etc., as well as local customs and culture, travel slide talks, and instructional excursions into the environments of the city.

The other, the Vienna Catholic Academy, attracts mostly hearers of at least college education, and offers a great variety of lectures and seminars on the very top level of excellence. Modern and classical languages, social studies, history of art, philosophy, psychology, courses of scientific and educational evaluation, to name just a few, are taught by priests and laymen who are all recognized authorities in their fields, so that the academy has in many ways the marks of a university extension. All of this is either free or for a barely nominal tuition—a fact which, like everything else that gets done in Austria these days, must be evaluated with a view to the tight financial straight-jacket that severely restricts the freedom of all but a very small minority.

Religious instruction in the schools, which used to be completely in the hands of the clergy, is becoming increasingly dependent on laymen, due to the already mentioned lack of priests. The Lay School of Theology covers two years of intensive theological training, taken in person or by mail, with a summer course in between. It has two divisions, according to previous education, and qualifies for the teaching of religion in schools and parishes. (People here are often quite shocked when you tell them that in the U. S. just anybody can teach Sunday school!)

### **the press and politics**

There are a number of Catholic weekly and monthly papers and magazines, whose cultural and intellectual level—as is recognized by disinterested persons as well—far surpasses that of similar neutral publications. In most Catholic papers you will find matters of economic, social, industrial, or just plain human interest, from agricultural developments to the manners of people on street cars, sharing the pages with articles of a purely spiritual, even scholarly approach. They are really part of daily life—just as on



other occasions, too, you are often pleasantly surprised by the lack of a defensive, "ghetto" mentality.

Some Catholic papers have taken a courageous and independent stand on political issues as well; not an easy thing in a country where party-politics enter into every sphere of daily life, from employment-seeking to elections in the local bowling club. In a country, moreover, that has in the past seen all too much intermingling of church and political interests. However, the post-war restriction of the clergy from political activity has frequently influenced the laity in a similar anti-political vein. The danger of such a policy of unconcern at a time when much political debate is about social, educational and family matters, has been increasingly recognized. Only a few weeks ago, the Working Committee of Catholic Interest Groups was established, a collective movement for political and public action according to Christian principles. Whether it will be able to make its weight felt depends now on the all-important question of whether it will succeed in steering clear of any particular party allegiance, thus convincing people and legislators of the purity of its purpose.

### **economic problems**

If, in the instances mentioned so far, Catholic initiative has grown from real necessity, this is eminently true in the face of complicated economic problems in Austria. Though the economic situation has improved strikingly since the post-war low of only a few years ago, enough poverty and dire destitution has remained. It is most desperate where the war has struck, not once only, but with repeated and concentrated blows. Many have lost a father or son, many a home or livelihood. But where all these happen together, where perhaps the one remaining breadwinner for a large family has returned maimed and handicapped, and the mother and children, sick from malnutrition and inadequate housing, need expensive medical care—for such a family there is just no chance of getting back on its feet again without generous outside help.

As it is, many a normal worker's family has to get along on fifty to one hundred dollars a month, with clothing costing almost what it does in the U. S., and food hardly less than half. (Most university professors, scientists, artists, medical internes and other professionals earn considerably less.)

Housing is a severe problem, what with buildings destroyed or made uninhabitable in the war, and a large number of living quarters unfit, as to space and healthiness, to house those who do still live in them. Apartment houses and settlements, it is true,



are being built everywhere by cities and townships; but they are frequently all but impossible to get into for anyone not belonging to the party which happened to sponsor their erection.

### **the world's lowest birthrate**

It is not surprising, then, that young couples hesitate to marry and have children. Austria has at present the sad record of the world's lowest birthrate, statisticians pointing out that the country is slowly but surely dying out. The one great Catholic concern, therefore, from the hierarchy down to the smallest lay group, is help for the family. At this, in the last analysis, most religious and social activity is aimed; for this articulate Catholics are ceaselessly clamoring by spoken and written word—agitating for an equalization of taxes, which present too great a burden for larger families; for revision of the present inadequate child subsidies; for family rates on streetcars and trains; and, above all, for family living wages that will enable people to have the children they want, and mothers to stay home and care for them.

Catholics have on occasion initiated practical action while the country's lawmakers were losing time with debates and party politics. The Diocesan Family Fund gives out no-interest loans to families and young couples for the purpose of establishing homes: one million Austrian schillings has been circulated in this way during the past year. The Fund also sponsors building projects for family-sized, family-priced apartments, one such project in Vienna being already completed, with occupancy depending solely on need. In various parts of the country, parishes have donated land to small, independent, co-operative building communities. The means of the Diocesan Fund come for most part from an annual lenten collection, which asks from everyone at least a day's earnings.

Widows of public and certain other employees, as well as war-widows, receive a modest pension from the state, often inadequate for one person. If they re-marry, however, they lose this pension, even though the husband's income may not suffice. As a consequence, thousands of couples live together without marriage, forced by the harshness of the law, and often against their conscience, into an immoral state of life. The bishops have repeatedly demanded a revision of this law to enable those couples who really depend on it to retain the widow's pension even when married. If the state does not act soon, the Church may, in defiance of civil law, permit priests to perform the marriage in such cases without a preceding civil ceremony.

## **Caritas**

The DP's that have poured into Austria from neighboring eastern countries have been an added problem, one that has largely been solved by their gradual and systematic absorption into economic and social life. The *Caritas* has been active here, as in so many other branches of social work. This organization, comparable in many ways to the N.C.W.C., has existed since long before the war, and has a wide field of action, taking in homes for working girls and for children, help for unmarried mothers, medical care for the poor and care for the aged. In the lean post-war years, the *Caritas* obtained foster places in hospitable countries for countless hungry Austrian children.

Much more recent—in fact no more than a few years old—are two groups which are both typically Austrian in their non-“organized,” unostentatious, personal approach. The “SOS-Society” was started by a few young Catholics, and is staffed almost exclusively by volunteers. Its method is simple and appealing: in regular columns donated by many newspapers, and on the radio, each of its carefully investigated cases is described individually, comes to life with all its particular poverty and sickness and misfortune. Donors can thus give a certain thing, or sum, to a certain family, and know just where it goes.

The Children's Village in the Tyrol was founded almost single-handedly by a young medical student with no funds at all, to take care of unwanted, pushed-around children, victims of broken homes and unstable post-war circumstances. It is based on the idea that no child can find in an institution a substitute for a home and a mother; and that, for such outcast and endangered children, things must not be just “good enough,” but the very best possible. Twelve charming little one-family houses, more to come, make up the village, each house with its eight to ten children of all ages, forming a real “family” with its own mother, who cooks, washes and cares for just that group, and is in all ways as much a real mother as possible. The atmosphere in the village is one of almost tangible love and happiness. Its support comes from many thousand “members,” who pay monthly dues of one schilling (less than a streetcar ride).

## **for bringing new life**

I have purposely refrained from calling upon the strong Catholic culture, customs and tradition, that are still the very breath of the country, as proofs for the vigor of present-day Catholic life. They do seem to bear witness to much more than is

admitted by figures and gloomy people; but taking for granted what you have always had can certainly be a very real danger. Yet when you know the many Church-centered feasts and celebrations, the shrines all over the countryside, the Angelus bells of the villages, the crucifixes in the corner of the country inns—and above all, the humble wisdom and pure strength of soul of so many plain people, so clearly founded in a very real Reality—you cannot but feel that here the need is not for sowing new seed, but for bringing new life from very old and very strong roots.

## SONG TO THE CHURCH

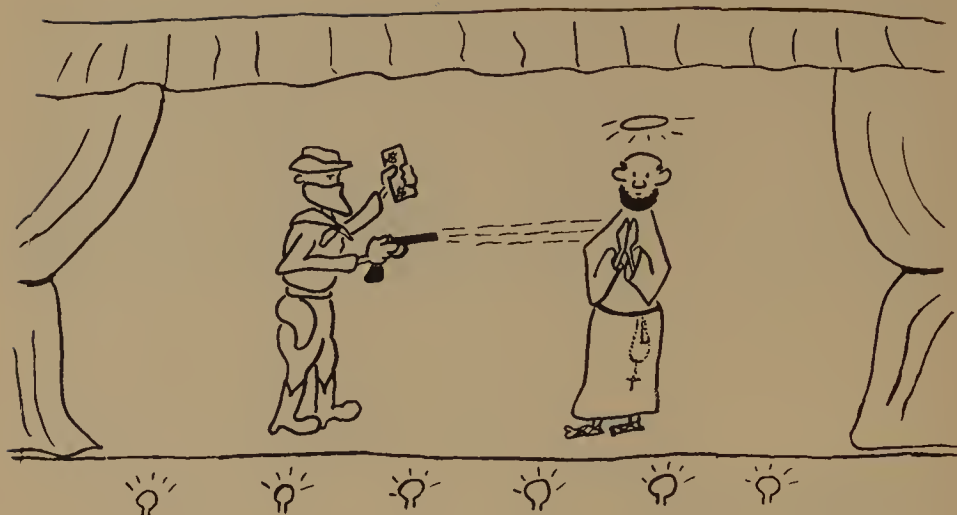
Bride of the Canticle,  
resting place of the dove!  
I bring you olive branches and palms,  
and my love.

Bells I have never heard  
sing to the risen Christ  
in Dijon;  
the glory of God rises out of Granada  
into the sun;  
all through the world you are beautiful:  
lovely your breast and your limbs.  
Therefore wine is poured out.  
Therefore poetry, and hymns.

Sing to the risen Christ, Mont-Saint-Michel, Notre Dame!  
Chartres is a bundle of myrrh; Rheims is a psalm.  
Therefore my spirit sleeps, and the Holy Ghost, the dove,  
feeds on your adoration,  
and my love.

Bride of the Canticle,  
resting place of the dove!  
I bring you olive branches and palms,  
and my love.

BEVERLY BOYD



## Drama and the Apostolate

**W**E warn you that Mr. Campbell uses his article on drama to put across many of his other pet ideas, on separatism and the social life of Catholics especially. Not that we mind a bit. Indeed Mr. Campbell who is in charge of dramatics at St. Thomas College, New Brunswick, Canada, writes from his own experience, and indicates quite clearly how all these ideas are connected.

**A. P. Campbell:** In these days of general interest in amateur theatricals, when Catholic schools and parish groups are busy with plays and anxious to win festivals, it might not be improper to ask whether the drama is being used or could be used as a medium for the expression of Catholic ideals, or, if you wish to put it another way, as an instrument for furthering the apostolate. The question at issue is not whether all drama should be religious and apostolic, but whether the drama may not be one of the very legitimate and effective agencies in this most important of all work. If it can be so used, it follows of course that it *should* be so used.

At this point we shall have to reckon with the man who wants to define and distinguish and ask whether there *is* such a thing as Catholic drama or Catholic theatre—he is the same man who caused so much ink-letting over the question of the Catholic



novel. Without going into the philosophical side of it, and leaving the question on a practical basis, since it is as a practical matter that it is being approached, we may say that a Catholic play is one that positively embodies and promotes Catholic dogmas and morals and ideals, even though these be not all exclusively Catholic. The critic who wishes to chew further on this particular bit of bubble gum must do so on his own time: *transeat*.

### **drama departments**

The first question, do Catholic drama groups produce Catholic or religious plays, must be answered in almost all cases in the negative. Many Catholic universities have been building up drama departments; but they have, by and large, done very little that would be different from that of the secular drama group. It is true that one must consider that such a department in such an institution has a specific and, by its nature, almost a professional work to do. It deals with the great plays of all times and all ages, and must consider, in part at least, the preparation of Catholic boys and girls for careers in the commercial theatres. The very least that one can demand of these schools is that they choose plays which are of solid worth, artistically, and morally sound. The popularity of such a man as Christopher Fry in the commercial theatre should induce our university groups to work with his beautiful and deeply spiritual plays.

When one turns to the drama club or dramatic activity generally of the ordinary arts school run by Catholics, the picture is pretty much the same: secular type plays—very poor ones at that—are chosen; when a Catholic or religious play is produced, it is often with little effort, no taste, and an air of apology to Art—Aristotle might be expected at any moment to blow the whole fusebox. Such schools could very easily—and should—do, along with Shakespeare, Fry, etc., at least one play a year that could be called Catholic in the sense which we have indicated. If there is to be any effective Catholic drama at all, it must have its encouragement and its beginnings in our Catholic colleges; for it is here that are found the future priests and teachers who will also be the leaders and directors of the parish or school drama groups. Such persons, in most cases, get no training in dramatics beyond what they receive in college dramatic societies; and as the tendency is so strong in us all to repeat what we have once done, or seen done, it is a pretty good bet that if Father helped to produce *Biddy Goes Berserk* at Saint Amby's, he will do Biddy when he is moderator of the parish dramatic guild.

## art or propaganda?

You will find many teachers and students (especially the “well-read” ones) about colleges who will shudder horribly at the notion of touching “propagandist” plays in the school. Wrapped in bits and pieces of Renaissance criticism, and standing firmly on the ground of *ars gratia artis*, these persons complain that you will spoil the drama if you give it a mission, or ask it to express ideas or exemplify ideals. “The play’s the thing—first, last and always.” That means, of course, that it must have no meaning and maintain no point of view. And so the religious play is left to the well-intentioned, but the puny and the slow, and allowed to wander in tatters with a bad name among the artists. And the stupidly educated go on waving their barren slogans, quite unaware of the harm they are doing.

Turning from the colleges and schools, let us look at the other type of drama group, that of the parish or the youth group. You might, perhaps, expect that these clubs by their nature would be more apostolic and zealous than those of the university and the school. Now, honestly, *do* they produce any plays that might indicate that theirs is a religious association? Do they do anything Catholic or Christian? Or do they as a rule produce anything worthwhile viewed from any angle? The answer so very often is—no: they do nothing that would distinguish them from the Tenth Street Drama Club.

Now what is the reason for the frivolous mentality of these Catholic dramatic societies? The reasons are various; two of them at least we can pinpoint: the notion that merely keeping Catholic young people together is adequate, and the pretty general habit of regarding the play merely as a means of raising money to support some other activity.

### Catholic Jack meets Catholic Jill

If you ask nearly any parish youth group what is its purpose and aim, you will get the simple answer, “To keep Catholic young people together.” Members of such groups, and directors of such groups, very often resent the notion that they should ever do anything like a religious play, or do anything that might be taken seriously as participation in Catholic culture. That is asking too much; besides, that was not why most of the members “joined up.” When you insinuate that the club might do serious work, shoulders are shrugged, and out comes the question, “How will you get them to come if you do that?” Well, supposing they don’t come at all, there will not be much loss if one may judge by what they get out of their very ordinary social clubs. We may pass over for a mo-

ment their not unfounded objection that it is impossible to get good plays: such an objection is at best an excuse. The real reason is to be found in their narrow and shallow notion of separatism. Catholics get together for the sake of being together and do as nearly as possible the same things as other groups of other faiths and of no faith. You call them together for bowling and bingo, badminton, dancing and dramatics—but not for Catholic dramatics. Let them have fun. Let them be together; marriages will result.

I do not for a moment deny the importance of having Catholic Jack meet Catholic Jill; but everything else is lost sight of in that one idea. Surely there are higher aims. Surely they should work more earnestly at the *reasons* for their separatism. If merely being separate is our goal, we should, perhaps, have Catholic buses and street cars. There we could be very separately together; and if you gave your seat to a lady you could be sure that she was a Catholic lady. We might put up a sign over our hall, *Catholic Fun and Games, Inc.* And inside "Marry a Catholic and be saved."

The narrow poverty of their aim and ambition is what keeps the young people in these clubs bored with themselves and with each other. The pity of it is that with the fire and idealism of youth they could be helping each other to grow in intellectual and spiritual strength and beauty. There is a time for fun and recreation, of course, but if we call our youth together chiefly for that purpose, there is little wonder that we are culturally dull and spiritually thin-blooded.

### **fruitful separatism**

My point of view may be considered obnoxiously separatist; but this is the only way in which separatism can be justified; the only way it can be fruitful. The cry against Catholic separatism, especially in education, is rather loud now; to it a number of Catholics add their voices. I read recently an article which claimed that our Catholic separatism had failed and that we must rig up some kind of compromise to take its place. I agree that separatism has to a good extent failed; but the remedy lies in the other direction. Far too often we fostered separatism for its own sake. The enemy came from within: by imitating other institutions and mentalities, by trying to run parallel to the seculars, we ran into the secular groove, and have now reached that unworthy and barren point of separation for its own sake. The way to recovery is straight back to the center of things: to a realization of why we are separate. Our separatist machinery must not be scrapped, but used to intensify our spiritual and cultural lives to such a degree

that we shall carry with us *everywhere* the burning flame of our faith and *pass it on to others* to add to the light of the world.

It might seem that the main point had been sacrificed to a digression; but the principle brought out here can be applied directly to Catholic drama. The extent to which most of these groups are secularized is best indicated by their conscious desire to do only secular plays, and say to all others, "See! After all, we are just like you!"

### **"the pay's the thing"**

It is about time to be specific on the activities of the average parish drama club. It must not be anything hard or deep. A comedy or a melodrama. "That's what our people want." If you are ambitious, you try something that was once a Broadway hit. But usually the script is chosen from the non-royalty section of the catalogue of the secular play publishers. Something popular. Local talent, even a cowboy show. That will pack them in!

Packing them in! There's the rub. And there is the second reason—and a very grievous one it is—why the club does what it does. Anybody who has had anything to do with amateur dramatics knows that the play is the maid of all work; it has one aim and one use, *to make money*. To raise money to support some other activity, to buy something for somebody, to pay for a trip or a dance, or the Lord knows what. But the play must pay! No matter how poor the play is, and how badly it is done, if it makes a profit everybody is happy; even the members of the audience scarcely mind, for they have the virtuous glow of having contributed to a good cause. The theatre as worthwhile in itself, as a form of human activity, or as a medium for moving people nobly, is never or very seldom a *good cause* with these people. A play that has a noble ideal, is artistically good, but carries a high royalty, costly costuming, and just breaks even, is a failure, no matter how well it is performed. It is true that worthwhile plays are sometimes successful financially, but usually they are not; the poorer the play, the better your chance of making that eight hundred dollars on it.

### **phony Catholic plays**

The objection, which I dodged a while back, that Catholic or religious plays are difficult or impossible to find, must be dealt with. There is some truth to it, but not sufficient to turn an honest searcher away from the task. The most difficult thing is to find something that is not only actable, but has a genuine ring to it; something that makes you say "Yes, that is it!" When you see a war veteran go purple in the face at a war movie, screaming that



it is "phony," you know how many Catholics feel in the presence of those plays and movies that are supposed to interpret Catholic life. They are sentimental and slanted directly toward the till; they are sweet and cute as buckwheat over naive old priests, and nuns in jeeps, and Catholics as patriotic after all, with everybody jolly and Going my Way or having Trouble Along the Way. *Libera nos, Domine!*

The most deeply religious play, perhaps, would be the scriptural play. The chief handicap is that there has been little genuine talent used in the preparation and adapting of such plays. Most of the modern ones are terribly false in tone and idiom. Especially hard to take is the unwilling-to-be-very-doctrinal, peripheral pieces surrounding the Passion of Our Lord. The worst feature of such plays is their stilted, archaic speech. There is, unfortunately, among us a reluctance to do scriptural plays in a genuine, frank, idiomatic language. It is hard to convince some people that the language of today is not as good a medium of devout feeling as that of the sixteenth, or that Christ on the stage had rather speak like King James than like Eisenhower. People who are afraid of being "irreverent" in this fashion need but to turn to the medieval miracle play for a precedent. For the medieval play used the vernacular with excellent effect; it was its peculiar strength that it combined reverence for God and His Church with a very realistic and hearty dialogue, rich in humor. Alas, today, even when the language is modernized for us, we find it hard to take the humor and the simple, direct tone; for we are hampered by an inherited false piety which shuts out both the humor and the plain language. Such plays as *The Second Shepherd's Play*, the *Deluge*, and *Everyman* can be very effectively produced by small groups. It may take some time to convert your public, but it will come.

### **Scripture in modern idiom**

It should not be a matter of adapting and re-hashing the medieval scriptural plays; what we need is the scriptural theme written by twentieth century man, for twentieth century man. Of course, when there is a demand for such plays, they will be produced—artists do not work in a vacuum or for a vacuum. The modern playwright can learn from the medieval play. It seems to me that two of our great modern playwrights, Fry and Shaw, are about the only ones writing in English who have been wise enough to learn from these old plays, especially the great secret of writing seriously, humanly and wittily at the same time. There is a great need for the scriptural play; our people are hungry for it, or if they are not, they need the vitamins it contains that will

give them an appetite for the things of the spirit. How much better than a dozen treatises on marriage is the living story of *Tobias*.

### **Ghéon's plays**

I make no attempt to give a list or make definitive recommendations; but I am very enthusiastic for the work done in religious drama by the great Frenchman Henri Ghéon. Many of his plays are available in translation, some of them published by Longmans Green and some by Sheed & Ward. Ghéon put the old, old stories into modern dress in a most delightful manner. It is a striking commentary on the mentality of our people that his very thoughtful and tender nativity play, *Christmas at the Cross-roads*, is shunned with distaste by Catholic groups, while Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, with its plumb pudding delights us all the time. I once produced Ghéon's *Parade at Devil's Bridge*, and *The Sausage Maker's Interlude*, two of his best plays. We had a great deal of fun making the simple, rather symbolic, sets and contriving costumes. We were delighted to find that these plays were very well received as sources of pleasure and profit (spiritually, that is). When I, in my enthusiasm, tried to persuade other Catholic groups to try these, I had no success. "They won't go over." "They are kind of queer." "Our people don't like that sort of thing." "They are pretty hard to do." One could scarcely find anything easier to produce; but I could see the fear of not getting a crowd, of not being a success. What was wanted was a simple little play, set in Mrs. McSmith's drawing room, with conventional furniture (the inevitable chesterfield to break the back of the stage hand!), and modern dresses on pretty girls, and business suits on well-groomed, husky young men.

I will give one more plug for Ghéon: those who are looking for a serious lenten drama might do well to take a peek at his play on St. Genesius, *The Comedian*.

### **take courage**

There is no lack of talent; there seldom is. What we lack in our Catholic drama groups is simple, direct honesty and the courage to be different. We must be honest enough to pitch overboard all oozy, cluttering sentimentality; we must be courageous enough not to be broken-hearted with poor houses that put no pennies in the bank and keep no pot a-boil. There are young people waiting for the challenge of something worth doing; and there are directors in every parish waiting patiently for the day when they can throw away the cheap catalogues and do something good for its own sake, and for the sake of truth.



**W**ELL-QUALIFIED to write about the Catholic ferment in England, John Todd, a leader of the Pax Christi movement and assistant editor of the *Downside Review*, had an article in our *Peace and War* issue.

**John M. Todd:** The English "R.C.s." were mysterious people. They either smelled, because they were poor; or they were unapproachable in other ways, like the Archbishop of Liverpool whom I used to see out for a walk with his dog, alone.

Later at Cambridge I discovered the third brand of Catholics, the intellectuals. I read some Newman, and I discovered that Catholic historians like Christopher Dawson seemed to make the best sense of European history. I read theology and discovered what the medieval world was all about. And then I heard of the idea of the Incarnation—the Word made Flesh, God made Man, in Jesus. But it took some hard experience of life before I came to believe it.

My point in this bit of personal history is that, as a somewhat typical English convert, I came into the Church through my head and through individual experience. I didn't come in because I had seen some Catholic parish and said: "Oh, look, sure, that's what the gospel describes."

Catholics and Catholic communities were generally mysteries—in the wrong sense. I had to find the Incarnation by reading

about it. And that's how things have been for a long time in England. Converts are limited to those with the time and capacity for certain experiences. So we find intellectuals dribbling into the Church at the top, and the born Catholics of the industrial worker class pouring out of it at the bottom; and numbers are maintained through the high Catholic birth rate.

### **three brands of Catholics**

But the fact that I can write this is an indication that things are changing. The situation I have described is coming to be recognized for what it is by more and more priests and laymen. It is being understood that it is not enough to have lots of respectable, individual, practicing Catholics. They have to show forth the Body of Christ. The Incarnation has to be visible to the non-Catholic in the Catholic parish. Past history has made this in some ways very difficult to achieve.

As I have suggested, water-tight compartments have tended to separate the three different brands of Catholics: 1) The great mass of working class Catholics, mostly located in the north, nearly all of Irish origin or related to the Irish in some way. 2) The ancient aristocratic families who kept the faith intact through the Reformation. 3) The new intellectual converts.

But the change I mentioned is certainly coming. This was well proven by the co-operation between these three groups working happily together on the English Delegation to the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate.

It is no exaggeration to say that the lay apostolate has become the spearhead of the Church in England. Nor is it discourteous to our priests and Bishops. The Holy Father himself in his speech at the World Congress spoke of lay people as being "in the front line," and so able to achieve more at times than anyone else.

It is of course impossible to give an all-over picture of the Church in England in a short space. One is tempted to linger over the history of the ancient families, like that of the Stonors and the Vaux (books about both of these have recently been published). Or one would like to lead the reader around the ancient churches and abbeys—and the modern ones, built by Catholics. These have all gone to make the Church in England what it is. But, for the moment, the people who are making a mark are the lay people, the good fruit of centuries of priestly toil.

### **the English Y.C.W.**

The sign of the primacy of this lay apostolate is a young man of Irish extraction, who started work at fifteen as a cotton worker



in Wigan, Lancashire. He is Pat Keegan, now International Secretary of the Young Christian Workers.

Although the Y.C.W. was founded in Belgium and started as a continental Catholic movement, yet English Catholic factory workers have taken to it. Their need was as desperate as that of their continental brethren, and it still is. The movement is still young in England.

Pat Keegan is the product of an environment which breeds despair when it does not breed extreme toughness. This toughness, with no doubt a special charism from the Holy Spirit, is what enables Pat to found and stimulate and guide Y.C.W. groups in every continent, although he has almost no command of any language but English.

Let's have a look at this desperate environment from which he came. It is one in which the family, the parish, and the school, at the moment, still fail to give young men and women an adequate preparation for the industrial world into which they are plunged at the age of fifteen.

Within one year of starting work well over half of all Catholic boys and girls cease to practice their faith. These figures were given some time ago by Father Edward Mitchinson, Chaplain General of the Y.C.W., in a special edition of *New Life*. His surveys of sample parishes were not absolutely scientific (that's a thing we still lack, a social study and research center) but they were sufficiently surely based to command assent. And since their publication, other priests and lay people have come forward with their own supporting witness. The figures have not been challenged. Anyone with a knowledge of Catholic city parishes knows they are true.

### **the problem of leakage**

This problem is known here as "leakage." The Catholic graduates simply disappear. In their twenties and thirties a tiny fraction return; later in life and on their death beds a bigger proportion return. But however large this latter figure, it doesn't undo the harm already achieved by those who have been lost.

We are getting a new outlook here. Baptism is no longer seen simply as a safe pass to heaven, so that even if you default on your policy for twenty years, you still get an option at the end to carry on. Baptism is seen rather as the sign of entry into the Christian community, the militant section of the Church of God. And that brings me to liturgy and to social action. They go together as products of the desire to make the Incarnation really and truly incarnate.

What is actually being done? For one thing, the Y.C.W. has tackled the leakage problem. Several years ago on the Feast of our Lady of Lourdes they founded the Pre-Y.C.W. This new body is already achieving results, as a bridge between school and factory. The physical and spiritual shock of going from school to work, with its temptation to throw over all the conventions of religion and family is being softened. And positive work is done to see that the right jobs go to the right people. This leakage problem is also one that the English Delegation to the World Congress has been studying at its half-yearly meetings.

Of other important lay societies, possibly the most notable are the Newman Association, for Catholic university graduates and professional workers, and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. The latter is earning a worthwhile reputation in its work for the general good of trade unions. This is of special importance because the communists have for years been running a campaign to gain control of the unions. Their hard and often good union work has led to their election. In many cases communists are actually running the unions, or at any rate the local branches.

To return to the World Congress. I mentioned Pat Keegan, because he was chosen by the hierarchy in England to lead the English Delegation, and Father Mitchinson was chosen as its chaplain. Its vice-chairman was Dermot de Trafford, a member of one of the old families I referred to, and at the very opposite end of the social scale from Pat. Dermot drives a Rolls Royce and lives on exclusive Curzon Street, and Hampshire. And within the Delegation we also had the third brand as well. Lance Wright, President of the Newman Association, an architect and previously a Protestant, is typical of the intellectual convert.

The Delegation has retained its Honorary Secretary, together with one typewriter, and a file of members' names and addresses and the activities of their societies. Thus it is possible for the substantial majority of the active Catholic laity to be mobilized quickly at need. At one time Delegation members received warning of the impending Abortion Bill to permit well-timed publicity to prevent its passage. When needed the member societies can combine together for a particular purpose, as they did when they ran a Catholic People's Week for African Students.

### **liturgical weeks**

And that brings me to liturgy. For these Catholic People's Weeks are liturgical weeks as well as weeks of discussion. The organizing society, the Association for Catholic People's Colleges, hires an institution two or three times a year. We sing Mass and

go to Communion each morning. We sing Compline every evening. (Perhaps this is more common in the United States. The great majority of English Catholics have never tried to do either thing. Many have never even witnessed either.) During the day priests and people discuss some particular subject from every possible angle. One subject last year was "The Family." So there was: "The Mass and the Family Meal," "The Family in the Ancient World," "The Family in the Medieval World," "The Family in the Industrial Town Today," and so forth. And we invited whole families to attend.

This work has sympathies with that of Grailville in the U.S.A. Doctor van Kersbergen of the American Grail made the acquaintance of Mr. Reginald F. Trevett while in England some years ago. Mr. Trevett is the founder of the Association for Catholic People's Colleges, in close co-operation with his old university pal, Dom Ralph Russell of Downside Abbey.

Downside, by the way, has some answers to the liturgical problems. The most obvious of these problems is that so many people claim that they are "disturbed" by singing, or by any ceremonial. At Downside, as at any flourishing Benedictine monastery, there is a combination of full liturgy and very fine chanting with a tradition of mental prayer. Here is the Church's true tradition, which in the generality of parishes has become watered down so often into a Mass mumbled as an accompaniment to people saying their rosaries.

One of the monks at Downside, a musician and organist of the first rank, is Dom Gregory Murray. He has recently composed a People's Mass, simple music for the Ordinary, which can be learned and sung easily, but which is yet within the Catholic musical traditions. There is a lot to be argued out yet, and there will be much heart burning. But at least we are moving away from the "precious" and archaic approach to the liturgy, and beginning to make of it something truly Catholic and popular again. In some ways England is in the same position as France twenty years ago. We shall soon see one apostolate merge into another, as they have done in France.

## **the Grail**

For many years the Grail was the only serious organization of the lay apostolate for women in England, as distinct from the multifarious pious or "charitable" associations. Now it has been joined by C.A.G.O. (Catholic Action Girls' Organization), but this is primarily a teen-agers' association.

One of the Grail's most successful achievements is a series of simplified editions of the encyclicals entitled *This is Marriage*, *This is Education*, etc. in which the essential thought of the encyclical is presented in short basic sentences, each with its own line of print. They are somewhat reminiscent of Peter Maurin's way of teaching, also of Eric Gill's presentation of an argument.

The Grail's best known achievement is their annual mime of the Passion for which they hire the vast Albert Hall in Kensington, home of the Promenade Concerts, and the place for innumerable national rallies. But their most important work is largely unseen, like so much basic work of the lay apostolate. They put a serious program of self-sanctification before their members, and set out to inspire Catholics with a conscious sense of vocation in the world, through their own particular jobs. They have a house on the edge of London, at Pinner, and a retreat house on Cistercian Caldey Island, where a rough sea channel keeps the pressing demands of the world at bay for a few days' recollection.

### **the Catholic press**

The Catholic press too is beginning to be, not a mere record of ecclesiastical functions, useful as this is, but a form of apostolate. Considering the size of the Catholic population in England, there can be no doubt that the press is good. But just how we keep going I'm not sure. Perhaps the truth is we live off America. We make our reputations in England and our living in the States. I don't need to draw your attention to the monthly article which the editor of *The Catholic Herald* of London finds it worth his while to write in *The Catholic World*. English Catholics are not rich; and what money they have is squeezed out of them by every possible football pool, bazaar and ticket draw to pay for the schools.

The intellectual periodicals maintain a very high standard. How they keep going and even manage to pay their contributors is a continual miracle to everyone. Three of them are run by religious orders (*The Downside Review* by the Benedictines, *Blackfriars* by the Dominicans, and *The Month* by the Jesuits) and are presumably heavily subsidized. As assistant editor of one I know that exchange arrangements with journals needed for the library, and the big number of books sent for review, help to make the venture worthwhile economically. *The Dublin Review*, published by Burns Oates, is kept going, they say, for prestige reasons.

And that brings me to Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. I'm not a literary critic and won't attempt to evaluate them. The point in this context is that their eminence in the literary field is typical of the eminence, less widely known, of other Catholics in



England, in almost every field of life. In politics we find Richard R. Stokes, Lord Pakenham, Christopher Hollis. In science we find Sir Edmund Whittaker and Dr. Sherwood Taylor. In broadcasting "The Third Programme" is almost a Catholic intellectuals' playground. And two of the most popular light broadcasters are Catholics, Gilbert Harding and Ted Kavanagh.

### **bewildering variety**

If the picture I have painted is bewildering in its variety, it mirrors the truth. And it is a truth not always easily seen as yet. The average parish church will provide little inspiration and less hope. But make other inquiries and it will not be difficult to uncover a group of laymen hard at some social project in the district, maybe getting people to build the houses they need, or a Y.C.W. group in the factory apostolate, or further afield the liturgical and intellectual breadth of one of the bigger religious houses. All these are in their beginnings, but they are strong infants, and they have the future of the Church in England in their hands.



### **MARY'S ENGLAND**

This is indeed  
A happy breed,  
Who reaffirm  
Their ancient creed.

## Liberalism, Secularism and the Ghetto Complex

**CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA**  
Harcourt, Brace, \$3.75

Like many other readers of *Commonweal* I followed their articles on Catholicism in America with great interest as they appeared week by week. Re-reading the series now collected in book form, I find that my reaction to them is still pretty much the same. But before giving it, I should like to say that the collection is obviously intended as an answer to Blanshard. The topics treated (Catholics and Politics, Catholics and Science, Catholics and Education, etc.) are the ones that he tackled. A major portion of the book is given over to answering those non-Catholics who view the Church with suspicion and distrust, who feel that Catholics are of necessity anti-democratic, and who are concerned with what would happen to American liberties if Catholics ever became a majority in this country. The writers (all laymen) do their best to allay these fears, and in so doing subject American Catholicism to a good deal of self-criticism.

Much of this is excellent; I'd hazard a guess that most of it is well-founded (though the article by Kuehnelt-Leddihn on the Catholic reactionary and the Catholic assimilationist, while highly diverting, leaves the reader wondering about the straw men he's constructed). Most of the self-criticism is directed against Catholic separatism, the ghetto complex, etc. My reaction to it is a mixture of basic agreement and uneasiness. It left this problem in my mind: the writers are rightly castigating American Catholicism for having been on the defensive so long, but isn't the general tone of their articles equally one of defensiveness? The painstaking care with which they show that Catholics really aren't all in agreement about politics, that Catholics really all don't believe in a monolithic system of education, that some Catholics take the artistic values of the cinema seriously even though the Legion of Decency doesn't—while all to the good, leaves one wondering. Perhaps this tone is inevitable, a reflection of a just-left-the-ghetto complex. Perhaps it is particularly evident since the book is patently serving the purpose of apologetics, and I am probably wrong in asking that it should be a positive witness to Christ and the riches of Christianity. Defense (of the old or new variety) seems dated to me. Is the basic need to prove to the liberals that Catholicism isn't really illiberal? I'm not arguing that this shouldn't be done, but is this the basic problem of American Catholicism?

Personally I think the writer in the series who really gets down to brass tacks in giving criticism is Will Herberg in "A Jew Looks at Catholics." "Catholicism does, of course, preach the doctrine of Original Sin, but in their own corporate life and practice American Catholics show too little sense of standing under the continuing judgment of God, which shatters all our pretensions and calls into question all our easy certainties and assurances. This would be my basic criticism of American Catholicism as I know it." And later on he says, "It may seem strange to charge such doughty champions of religion as American Catholics with secularism, but what is secularism but the outlook in which religion is separated from life and relegated to a purely private status, peripheral to the vital areas

of economics, politics and culture, which are held to have autonomous nonreligious foundations? What is secularism, in short, but the conviction that 'business is business,' the affair of the businessman, just as 'religion' is the affair of the priest? In this sense, secularism quite pervades the thinking of large numbers of American Catholics—a fact testified to by a familiar Catholic attitude that resents papal encyclicals on labor and industry as an intrusion of religion into a sphere where it does not properly belong." He concludes his essay: "The criticisms I have made here are criticisms not of Catholic teaching but of attitudes and practices that seem to me to be essentially untrue to Catholic doctrine and tradition."

It seems to me what he is saying is that Catholics aren't truly Catholic. And this to me is the crux of the matter. Merely participating where formerly we were separatist will solve nothing unless we have something to bring to those areas of American life. Ed Marciniak in his essay on "Catholics and Social Reform" recognizes this when he writes, "The 'salvation' of today's institutions, as the Catholic social movement recognizes, demands witnesses much more than apologists. Witnesses who will reveal the Christian mystery, whole and undefiled, by their devoted service in the political party, trade association, medical society, union, or community organization."

I wish there were more of this note of witness in the book, but nevertheless there is much of value in it. John Cogley's cogent arguments in "Catholics and American Democracy," Joseph E. Cunneen's provocative remarks about Catholic education, Walter Kerr's memorable article on the movies, and Dan Herr's welcome common sense in "Reading and Writing," all make the book quite worthwhile.

DOROTHY DOHEN

### Good Mertoneseque

#### BREAD IN THE WILDERNESS

By Thomas Merton

New Directions, \$6.00

Published in 1953, this book reached the reviewer accompanied by ten profuse passages of praise for it garnered from vari-

ous sources, many of them newspapers. All agree that it is a fine book, that Merton's style was never better, that it reflects a great deal of fervor and radiance.

Measuring eight by ten inches, it is a beautiful book, materially speaking. Pictures of the *Devot Christ*, a stark realistic wood-carving in the Cathedral of Perpignan, are interspersed throughout and serve to separate the sections. The print is large and clear, and the format is novel in that section headings are printed in the left margin of each page, with chapter headings in the opposite margin.

The style is good Mertoneseque, and frequently flashes with brilliance. It serves as a medium for a brief (there are less than a hundred full pages of text) presentation of the traditional doctrine on contemplation and its growth in conjunction with the liturgical prayer of the monks who recite the psalms. It is obvious that the author has a keen appreciation of the liturgical side of the Cistercian ideal, and equally so that he uses the psalms of the Office as a man who has found a great treasure. Like the psalmist, he boldly seeks to see the very Face of God in the mysterious nights of dark suffering, and his book has at least this advantage, that it prepares and

instructs all who venture into the paths of sanctity as to just what awaits them at the end, and what pitfalls line their course toward that blessed end.

It is only because the reviewer feels that his criticism can do no harm to one as firmly established as a writer as Thomas Merton that he presumes to suggest that there are undoubtedly some who will not be attracted by such floods of poetic prose and personal accommodations of the texts of Sacred Scripture. All but the most exacting of critics will overlook the somewhat repetitious "That is why . . ." which betrays the author's early days in France, and the occasional confusion between revelation and inspiration, allegory and allegorical, and the generally unpredictable direction of the development of ideas. Again, and of course this will depend much upon one's own personal inclinations in such matters, something might have been said of the inner structure of the psalms, and of the primordial law of parallelism of thought which governs their construction. It might be objected that one need not know the laws of meter to appreciate a beautiful poem, and this is perfectly true, especially when the poem is written along the lines of our Western thought-processes; but where the Semitic thought-processes preside over the making of the poem, understanding might well prepare the way for the soaring flights of spirit which such poems may initiate. Another advantage to such elementary understanding of the "scaffolding" around the cathedrals of sacred song (that is what the psalms are), is that the reader who finishes this book might not only have been stimulated by the rich theological content of the psalms, but might himself undertake a profitable personal analysis of some of them *as wholes*, instead of regarding them as so many quarries for the production of beautiful but unrelated texts.

R. T. A. MURPHY, O.P.

### Jacques Maritain: The Man and the Philosopher

THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
JACQUES MARITAIN  
By Charles A. Fecher  
Newman, \$5.00

Believing that the works of Jacques Maritain are forbidden territory for the laity, that is, for "the average intelligent reader, unacquainted with philosophy in general and the highly technical apparatus of scholasticism in particular," Charles Fecher has undertaken in this volume to present Maritain's thought in a clear and untechnical fashion and to supply a précis of the philosopher's ideas for the benefit of the uninformed. Aware at the same time that the quest for truth, the proper work of philosophy, ought not to be dull business, the author has endeavored to avoid a certain pedantic style which, he maintains, spoils so many ancient and current philosophical works. To accomplish his over-all end in the most effective manner possible, he has seen fit to use the words of Maritain himself whenever convenient and when it is not so he has paraphrased as succinctly as possible.

Since Jacques Maritain, the philosopher, is unintelligible apart from Jacques Maritain, the man, a brief biographical sketch is given in the first section of the book. Readers, perhaps, will find this first part most appealing, for it is here that we are given an inviting and satisfying glimpse of Maritain, the man. These few chapters will more than likely be a powerful incentive toward reading those larger biographical works from which the details of Maritain's life are culled, notably *Adventures in Grace* and *We Have Been Friends Together*, both written by Raissa Maritain, wife of



the philosopher. In the brief space allotted to the treating of Maritain's life, Fecher has done a commendable job.

By far the largest section of the book is devoted to setting forth the philosophical thought of Maritain. Starting with a brief introduction to the nature of philosophy, the author develops in turn logic, epistemology, psychology, cosmology, ontology, ethics, political philosophy, the philosophy of education and of art, and finally, natural theology. In the domain beyond that proper to philosophy, yet so delicately allied to it, to which Maritain has made noteworthy contributions, Fecher treats of theology and mysticism. Though it may be objected that the author has been over-ambitious in biting off such a large piece for such a limited volume, it must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that he has certainly devoted much time to reading, to assimilating, and finally to presenting, in what we may say is at least an intelligible summary, the main currents in Maritain's thought. When we consider that the author intended this work for the uninitiated, we must agree that he has achieved a fair measure of success.

In the final division of the book, two chapters showing the relationship between Maritain and Thomism, we find that the author has allowed himself to be carried away in some degree by his esteem for Maritain, and that, consequently, these two chapters take on the nature of a eulogy. While he clearly gives credit to other Thomists, notably Etienne Gilson, Father Phelan, and Anton Pegis, we cannot help but sense the implication that Fecher considers Maritain far in advance of these worthy philosophers. But then, the implication might be an imaginary one, and the author might only be giving expression to his admiration for what Jacques Maritain has achieved working within the Scholastic Synthesis, not intending any comparison at all with others in the same field. On the other hand, we might have been more impressed and convinced of the worth of Maritain as a thinker had the author restrained himself in his praise and given, perhaps, a few of the objections (and there are some) which respected philosophers have levelled, albeit most respectfully, against Maritain. It would have served to render the work somewhat more balanced and less open to a suspicion of prejudice.

BROTHER JOEL MATTHEWS, F.M.S.

## The Role of the Layman

**THE APOSTOLIC ITCH**  
By Vincent J. Giese  
Fides, \$2.75

There is a great need for more publications like this. It is a book written by a layman for lay people, about their role as Christians in the world today. Many

books written to assist the layman in restoring all things to Christ succeed only in outlining the principles which should guide his conduct. Vincent J. Giese attempts in *The Apostolic Itch* to make his work practical as well as inspiring.

In the chapter on lay spirituality he takes into consideration the possibility of a dedicated single lay life. He gives six problems which he feels lay people face when they embrace such a life. In this same chapter the author puts the emphasis on the liturgy, the New Testament and the Old Testament in the spiritual formation of the lay person. "We have a generation of young people in our midst now who find themselves in a

state of spiritual indecision. They have been convinced that the prayer formulas, which may have satisfied their parents, no longer fit the needs of apostolic laymen, but they have not found as full a satisfaction from the return to the liturgy as they had been promised. When they have substituted Compline, for example, for evening prayers, or have substituted the psalms in place of formula prayers, they find these are not intelligible. Why? Because they have never been introduced to the Bible until now. They do not understand these liturgical prayers, because they have not enough understanding of their origins in Scripture, the historical events from which they came, the significance of the Old Testament in terms of the fulfillment of the New Law."

Here I would like to say that I believe that much of Mr. Giese's book is directed to lay people who are already involved actively or associated or interested in some way with lay apostolic groups. In this respect I believe the book may be discouraging to newcomers who have no idea about what is already being done. In the chapter on the "apostolic itch" the newcomer may see a warning to stay away from those now interested and working with lay apostolic groups. Whereas contact with the people working and sacrificing can certainly be used by the Holy Spirit to touch the soul.

In the chapter on the role of the layman the author seems to oversimplify in his explanation of the new emphasis on the role of the layman. In one spot Mr. Giese mentions "we have swapped places with the clergy in everyday life." He, of course, refers to a previous statement wherein he contends that there was a day in the Church when the clergy gave leadership to the laity. "There was a time in the history of the world when the laity were truly sheep, mere followers of the shepherd, who was the priest." The layman is not swapping places with the clergy, he is just assuming the responsibility which is his because he is a layman and because he is in the world and because he is the professional man, the technician. There are two distinctive roles here. There are two leadership positions. The priest gives leadership also, for from him we should receive moral and spiritual leadership. For this kind of leadership there is a great need; the world does not look to the Church, the workers do not look to the Church, for the solution to their problems. It is for the layman to give another kind of leadership. He is to incarnate, to bear witness, to apply, to live according to this leadership of the Church, of Christ. The layman must then "breathe the Christian spirit into this massive, complicated society" which he has been building according to norms other than those of Christ.

We need more books touching on the task of the layman in the modern world. It is hoped that other writers will be encouraged by Mr. Giese's book to write for lay people.

RITA JOSEPH

## Eastern Mysticism

**ASPECTS OF BUDDHISM**  
By Henri de Lubac, S.J.  
Sheed & Ward, \$3.00

Father de Lubac, as might be expected of such a serious thinker, neither takes nor dismisses Buddhism lightly. If he shares the opinion, held by some that

Buddha may prove Christ's last enemy, the learned Jesuit gives his Master's opponent every chance and all respect.

His findings may appear very disappointing to those who find the gospels too impracticable and have vague yearnings toward Eastern spirituality. Father de Lubac demonstrates that buddhistic contemplation is just as difficult to attain as Western contemplation and is infinitely less consoling.

The first chapter deals with Buddhist charity: "Maitri" or loving kindness, a very pure feeling, so pure that it seems, at the very end, to be emptied of warmth. Love is supposed to bring pain and the perfect Buddhist must be quite serene. Nevertheless the picture drawn of the Buddha Sakyamuni on his quest for charity, through dispossession and purification, is an edifying and beautiful one; and his followers are much to be admired. If the Buddha, a perfect man, if ever there was one, was not able to leave behind him the perfect word, the Word itself, as compared to that other perfect Man, that is because he was not God.

The second chapter, "Two Cosmic Trees," illustrates all the analogies that can be found between the Body of Christ and the Cross, tree of Life and the pillar, banyan or ladder of Buddha; the origin based on an ancient myth dear to all men and much utilized in Buddhist symbolism and Christian primitive art.

The last chapter, "Different Manifestations of Christ and the Buddha," weighs constantly a beautiful world of illusion with the historic concreteness of the Incarnation; the drops of blood falling on Calvary with a golden legend and—also—two very different states of mind. No Christian is presumptuous enough to think he can save himself or others without the act of God that redeemed him. But the Buddhist achieves this through his own transfiguration. Here are no children of light, the faithful are the light itself. Buddhistic enlightenment appears singularly static as compared with Christian contemplation and also desperately monotonous and negative. St. John of the Cross, often mentioned in the book, becomes more than even significant with the magnificent "yes" of human sacrifice.

To this reviewer the book shows very clearly the appeal of Buddhism to puritans. The negative attitude to the good things of life, the near-contemptuous denial of passion must seem at first easy and rather familiar to those austere souls. But they forget an essential truth. The people in countries where Buddhism is practised, particularly India, take human values very highly as such as long as they do not aspire to a greater spiritual life.

If it were not presumptuous to find even a very small fault with such a great writer, it might be regretted that he proves himself such a very obedient son of the Company of Jesus. None of the temptations abundantly proffered by the gorgeous pageantry of Buddhist poetry and lyricism ever glide over him. If he had cried "Behind, Satan" a second later, perhaps his book would have been a little less dry. His mind always remains a little too clear, a little too Western and he condemns as ridiculous and puerile certain legends that seem to harmonize very well with Eastern folklore and mentality.

ANNE TAILLEFER



## Freud and St. Thomas

**NEUROTIC ANXIETY**  
By Charleen Schwartz  
Sheed & Ward, \$2.75

This volume is the result of work done at Laval University by the author, and it seeks to indicate the possibility of a real synthesis between Freudian psychological discoveries and the Christian conception of man and his supernatural life. The general principles underlying such a synthesis are pointed out in the first chapter, in which are to be found many sound and valuable observations. The author accepts, and rightly so, the scientifically established facts of Freud, and then points out that, in regard to the Freudian interpretation of these facts, the two extremes of complete acceptance and total rejection are to be avoided. Mrs. Schwartz dwells especially on Freud's rejection of the higher rational processes and drives in human nature. She also suggests various tentative correlations in terminology: for example, between the Freudian "super-ego" and the Thomistic "practical intellect," and between the "ego" and the "will," and insists that many of Freud's observations on these components of the mental apparatus are of great value and are not opposed to Christian traditional thought. Once one can correct Freud, by asserting the primacy of the rational in man, the Catholic has much to gain from psychoanalysis, in the understanding and care of neuroses and other personality disorders. The proper care of these disturbances, it is pointed out, makes man more suited to the work of grace and the development of the spiritual life.

The remainder of the volume is devoted to a study of conversion and anxiety hysteria, and the obsessive-compulsive neuroses, with attention being given especially to the discussion of anxiety and feelings of guilt.

The author's general purpose is to criticize many Freudian principles as to the origin of neuroses, and to develop what is considered to be a more satisfactory explanation. A principal point of criticism—and one which any Catholic or Thomist would and must accept—is Freud's neglect and even rejection of man's spiritual and rational nature and activity. Some of the other criticisms, however, of a more particular nature are difficult to accept, because the author seems to misunderstand the Freudian position. There appears to be some confusions between the emotional and the higher, intellectual or volitional, planes, as well as between the unconscious and conscious levels of mental life.

These difficulties may be due, in part, to the influence of Mrs. Schwartz' own contention: that neuroses (those developing in adult life) are due above all to a rational disorder (p. 59), that is, to a failure on the part of the human intellect and will. In fact, the author goes so far as to claim that the different forms of neuroses are differentiated by the various rational or voluntary attitudes taken by the neurotic to his own behavior. Mrs. Schwartz claims that Freud made the conflict between the instinctual drives of the *Id* and the demands of the super-ego the source of neurosis (this itself is not wholly correct). She then goes on to correlate the super-ego with our notion of the moral conscience, and thus derives the origin of neurosis from the conflict of conscience and the demands of the animal instinct. This is a somewhat oversimplified presentation of the author's position, but it is fundamentally correct.

A general criticism of this position may be stated thus: while it is quite true that a compromise with the demands of conscience does cause



anxiety and feelings of guilt, such a compromise does not explain the specifically pathological, excessive fears, feelings of guilt, and anxieties of the neurotic. It may well be that such a compromise, and the fear of its consequences, does provide the "situation" which may lead to a neurotic response. But the form of neurosis, and the fact that such a situation does provoke a neurotic reaction depend for their explanation on the emotional patterns developed in infancy, before the emergence of conscience, and even, in many cases, before the development of the Freudian super-ego.

The recognition and emphasis to be put on the rational, and its primacy in human nature do not require that one seek the origin of neurotic, emotional behavior in the rational, or voluntary activity of man. The author, it seems, has, in one way or another, correlated too closely the emotional and the rational, and has become involved in contradictions (for example, repressed guilt that can be absolved, p. 81) as a result of this position. While many of the author's observations are quite correct, both in criticism of Freud and in positive interpretation of neurotic behavior, the comments made above do not allow us to accept her principal position of synthesis.

DOM GREGORY STEVENS, S.T.D.

## Fire on the Earth

**CATHERINE OF SIENA**

By Sigrid Undset

Sheed & Ward, \$3.50

"It is no wonder that Sigrid Undset, with her love for Italy and her deep understanding of the Middle Ages, should have chosen to write of St. Catherine of

Siena. . . ." Thus the publisher's notice on the jacket. There is, I think, another reason why Sigrid Undset is particularly fitted to write this life. Sheed & Ward last year published a book on Sigrid Undset which is subtitled "A Study in Christian Realism." I haven't seen the book but any valid study of Undset would be just that, for it was the essence of her greatness that she saw man as he is, in all his degradation and nobility, kin to the angels and the beasts. Catherine was a miracle of grace in a time of frightful wickedness. Only a *Christian realist* could see the jewel in its setting and make the picture credible. I know that even in this short review I shall find it hard to speak of Catherine without falsifying the image. For how should one characterize a child of man, miraculously united to God, living in the borderland between heaven and earth, engaged in a tremendous commerce between God and man, completely immersed in the ocean of God's wisdom and love, yet retaining in its fullness her rich humanity? There is no contradiction. "He that loseth his life shall find it." Yet mystery remains, the mysterious conjunction of human liberty and divine providence, and we must tread softly if we would not do violence to the wonder, for it is perhaps not a bad time to say that this is one of the great original miracles, our freedom under God.

Of the time it will be enough to note that when papal mercenaries under Sir John Hawkwood took the Italian town of Casena, they put the men to the sword and gave the women to the troops. It was under such conditions that Catherine undertook to support the papacy, against its external enemies and against its own corruption. We may be grateful for her ultimate success, centuries after her death. In the great upheavals of our time it has been a powerful defense to have on the throne of Peter

honorable and saintly men, undisturbed in their government within the body of the Church.

But while Catherine's social and political activity was very great, it was only the overflow of her personal affair with God. I quote from the account of the betrothal: "Around Christ there now appeared His blessed mother, the apostle St. John the Evangelist and St. Paul, and David the poet-king bearing a harp on which he played beautiful melodies. As is the custom at betrothals the mother, the Virgin Mary, stepped forward and took Catherine's right hand. She lifted it up to her Son, and bade Him bind His bride to Him in faith as He had promised."

Catherine experienced her first vision of Our Lord and His company when she was about six years old. One might say that she breathed the air of heaven ever after, though (and it is another measure of her sanctity) she fought swarms of demons even on her deathbed.

In the course of her life on earth Catherine accumulated an extraordinary retinue. So great was her apostolic power that three priests were assigned to her at all times to administer the sacraments to her converts. She had an immense correspondence and a number of admirable young men acted as her secretaries. Many others, men and women, accompanied her wherever she went. Their story is one of the strong points of the book.

The translation by Kate Austin-Lund is quite readable and the printing as a whole is good but a further proof-reading would be in order before a second printing. There are several obvious typographical errors and I believe that the date, 1371, given in the first sentence of Chapter XX should be 1377.

J. E. P. BUTLER

## How to Love

**THE LAW OF LOVE**  
By Francis Devas, S.J.  
Ed. by Philip Caraman, S.J.  
Kenedy, \$2.75

The spiritual teaching of Francis Devas is a collection of his talks, edited and put into book form. It's a small book, and yet it contains one hundred and thirteen essays. One of the main faults of the

book is the brevity of each essay. Another is that each one has to be read separately for itself. There is not much coordination between each essay and the preceding or following ones and there is no particular development of ideas.

However, many of the essays are excellent in themselves and will inspire simple, practical meditation. The style is that of giving advice, not so much of what to do, but of how to love, how to think, and how to make one's whole life God-centered. Father Devas realizes with compassion that we are all sinners, all have tremendous pride, and many faults. And yet we all have a great power of love capable of being fully developed. "The whole of Christianity is that surrendering of ourselves to God and using His gifts and allowing Him to help us and recognizing His great share in the good we do."

Father Devas covers a lot of ground—love, prayer, communion of saints, sin, death, mercy, marriage, etc.—but he puts first things first. He emphasizes charity, the love of God and neighbor. "The more I love God, the more I am compelled to love my neighbor." We are completely dependent on God and yet "we need what one may call the natural grace of mutual dependence on each each other here on earth."

PEGGY SHORT

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(Continued on inside back cover)